

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR COPY-PREVENTION OF DIGITAL COPYRIGHT WORKS

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FIELD OF INVENTION

This application is a continuation application of US application Serial No. 08/882,511, which is now abandoned, which is a divisional application of US application Serial No. 08/707,289, which is now abandoned.

This invention relates primarily to copy protection, and more specifically to systems for preventing unauthorized copying of digital data. The invention has specific application to the copy protection of digital information such as images, audio, video, text, and computer programs.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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15 The ability to control access and/or distribution of digital data is one of the greatest unsolved technical problems that must be dealt with in the information age. Digital publishers lose billions of dollars due to copyright fraud. Losses include illegal copying of software, video tapes, video games, and audio cassettes. Such copyright fraud ranges from organized large pirating operations in countries where copyright laws are not strictly enforced to individual purchasers of digital works who make two or three copies for friends.

20 The current art uses cryptography to enforce copyright laws for digital data. Cryptographic techniques are capable of restricting access to confidential data to those who know the appropriate decryption keys. However without special secure hardware to protect the decryption keys, users cannot reliably be prevented from sharing decryption keys, such as by giving them to friends, posting them to computer bulletin boards, selling them, etc. Worse, once the content has been decrypted, it can be copied and distributed freely.

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25 Many copy protection techniques known in the art are limited to computer programs, relying on physical objects which are difficult to copy (such as dongles or media with irregular formatting). The protected program contains special software that tests if the physical object is

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